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DELTA NECK LINE THREATENS A REVOLUTION IN FASHIONS

White Is Disappearing and Deep Decolletage Is Seen Even in Frocks for Day Wear—High Collars Introduced on Coats—Fewer French Blouses and Tailored Suits a Sign of the Times

THE world that amuses or instructs itself by watching the changes in dress finds itself highly diverted in the month of May. This is the time for settlement.

February is full of rumors and cables from Paris concerning the gowns that are expected there by the dressmakers. During the month of March the clothes that arrive in America are shown first by the importers, who cater to the dressmakers, then by the dressmakers and shops, who cater to the public. After the first week of April the public takes a hand in the settlement of fashions and wears its new spring clothes at all hours, with reckless prodigality.

Now we come to the month of observation. We see what has failed and what has succeeded. We know what the public likes and what it has discarded.

The situation in the rooms of the dressmakers and in the shops is also important and interesting. The dressmakers, who are clever and watch shrewdly the turn that fashions take in the approval of the public, begin quickly to withdraw two sets of gowns by the middle of April: One is the over-popular set, which has been commonized in cheap material and run through all channels of commerce; the other is the extreme or undesirable set, that has not appealed to the public and has been passed up with indifferent or sarcastic comment.

One important man dressmaker in New York said that out of one hundred and fifty models which he showed at the end of March he withdrew all but forty-five for the month of April. A woman dressmaker, who has an important house and who caters to conservative and fashionable women outside of New York as well as in it, says that she withdrew a great number of her models by the first of April because they were in the windows of the ready-to-wear shops, selling at a fifth of the price she was compelled to ask for them.

Easter Parade Proves Nothing.

There was a time long, long ago when the public believed that the Easter parade clinched the fashions for spring and summer. Recently the church calendar seems to have left itself to the clothes-and-climate calen-

dar in the fact that Easter has been scheduled for the first part of April. This allows every woman to come out in her spring clothes if she so desires, but as a rule the women of importance do not thus desire.

They go to the country or they wear winter frocks to the Easter services. So the parade proves nothing, except that it is a joyous day full of sunshine and a seeming if not a real happiness and gaiety breaking out on the faces of all who take part.

And the clothes question has been abandoned. The settlement of fashions is proved in another way, by another set, and not on Sundays. The "Sunday best" belongs to the days when church was a recreation to great masses of people who had few other means of foregathering. Sunday was a day of feasting as well as prayer, and one put on one's best raiment to be admired.

By the way, this last Easter parade, taking place in Fifth avenue, overturned all the traditions which have clung to the Easter Sunday church parades all over the world. No one looked at the clothes of the women. Every one looked at the clothes of the men. Even the women forgot to observe each other in their scrutiny, comment and gay appreciation of the uniforms of the men.

A British General who was a guest in the city said the scene made him homesick for the road to the front. He insisted that Fifth avenue—in its three miles of brilliant crushing together of the military and its admirers, automobiles, motor buses and immense army trucks going through with supplies—was a duplicate of the road to the front in Flanders and France.

"Eliminate the women in gay clothes," he said, "and you have a better picture of the lines behind the front than any movie can give."

Women Eliminated.

And the women eliminated themselves in their sheer admiration of the uniforms. Soldiers of every flag were represented in the parade. Capes, stripes, medals, odd caps, wonderful colors, light blue dashing against dark blue, khaki with and without capes, boots of every kind, canes switching from the hands of officers, the elbows of sailors at right angles pushing their way through the crowds—all made a conglomerate, kaleidoscopic picture which no one who saw it will want to forget.

All that women did in this vast war time parade was to gossip incessantly concerning the cut of the Italian aviator's coat, the jacket of the British General, the wonderful costume of the Serbians, the dash of the French

marines, and to wonder what was the meaning of all the various hats and shoulder straps on the uniforms of all our allies.

This tremendous offensive reached its high wave between Fifty-third and Fifty-fifth streets, where an Episcopal clergyman was celebrating his twenty-fifth anniversary as rector of a famous church, and where a great Presbyterian minister was saying goodbye to a congregation who adored him, because his King had called him home to do his bit in the pulpit.

All of which, you may say, has nothing to do with spring fashions. But no one can fail to feel the significance of the vast Easter parade in the largest city in America, which, while it is supposed to put the stamp on spring fashions, turned into a parade of men, whose clothes were the dominant features of the scene. Is this an omen of the future?

Established Neck Line.

In the settlement of fashions which comes this month there is one predominant feature that interests the majority as well as the minority. It is the new arrangement of the neck line.

This style has been creeping on us since January, but it seems to have sprung out of ambush and attacked the people as the warm weather burst over the land.

Those who were not observing fashion closely went about with their shirtwaist collars pulled out over the coat collars or the wide collars of gimpes pulled out over the bare edge of a one piece frock.

Then suddenly the whole process seemed to be wrong. The careless public observed that the fastidious crowd had abandoned white collars. They also noticed that the neck line of a one piece frock was not outlined by a collar except at the back. They noticed that sailor collars had disappeared from fashionable garments.

They realized that the neck line instead of being V shaped was square and deeply decolletage, or delta shaped—the decolletage that we associate with Dresden shepherdesses, Dolly Varden styles, Mozartian opera and Janice Meredith. This kind of neck line was accepted only for frocks; it should go without saying that it was not contemplated for coats.

But whatever the garment its neck line was no more hidden and enveloped by a white collar. It is quite probable that this somersault in fashions disturbed the minds of more women than even the incoming of the tight skirt, for it necessitated thought and an entire change in the arrangement of the garments which have been

carelessly worn in the same combination for several seasons. It made one go into numerous shops and regard one's self for numerous moments before mirrors in order to secure a satisfactory adjustment of the new fashion to one's neck and face.

And another movement in the arrangement of the neck is disquieting. It is the introduction of the high collar at an hour when the high fashion designers decided to discard it, and the public was informed that it was no longer in first fashion. No sooner had this edict gone out and been accepted than a vast number of women—well dressed women too—appeared with high loose collars that either enveloped the chin or rolled in a loose fold beneath it.

High Collar on Coat Suits.

There are two or three practical things that every woman must somehow manage to master in this new fashion if she intends to look her best during the warm weather season.

One of them is that a coat suit requires some kind of collar at the back and sides of the neck line to prevent the rough material from resting against the skin.

Some women have found out that the simplest way to achieve a becoming combination right here is to remove the revers from the coat and either bind or fancy stitch the edges, and then put a plique or linen collar around the back to end at the collar bone in front.

Others have adopted a new kind of fine pique collar, which is cut on the exact line of the long revers that are on the majority of jackets, and this is basted carefully on the inside of the coat and pressed flat over the edge.

Another feature of the new neck arrangement which it is well to absorb into the mind is that the blouse with the Italian decolletage is the best to wear under all coats. It is wiser to avoid superimposing one collar on another.

This Italian neck line may be round, or straight across the shoulders, or brought to the base of the neck. The wearer must decide on that. Her features should determine the exact curve or lack of curve which is employed.

Low Neck for Day Wear.

Another interesting detail of fashion is the definite tendency toward a deep decolletage for day usage. The neck line may be on the Italian model, or it may be on the American Colonial model, which brings the material high and tight against the back and side of the neck and then dips it down to a deep square or delta in front. The introduction of the high collar



At left—Gown in the fashionable jade green; chiffon bodice fastened at side with a rose and mounted over silver lace; skirt of crepe de chine with side drape of chiffon caught with pink roses. At right—American coat suit of dark blue gabardine, with loose jacket held at hips by sash run through loops.

seems to have come about through necessity rather than choice or inclination. True, there are smart women who insist that their one piece frocks shall have these upstanding, flowerlike collars that rise on the stem of the neck and open out wide to envelop the chin and the back of the head, but the majority of women have adopted high collars only with coat suits. They don't know any other kind of collar to adjust with a jacket that is high in the neck and has rolling revers.

They find that the wash blouse, which has a high turnover collar and is worn with a cravat of black or colored pique ribbon, gives just the right silhouette to the neck line of an everyday coat suit. If this high collar cannot be adopted then a low one must be worn with the suit because of its collarless condition.

One hears on every side that more women's tailors are out of employment than any other class of people. Their leaders are pleading with the Government to give them uniforms to do to keep them from starvation. A number of dressmaking houses have de- cided to take these men on to make skirts of one piece cloth frocks in order to keep them busy.

The emaciated situation is due, so the students of labor conditions say, to the aversion of the average woman to a tailored suit, because France, who is minus tailors, has issued the decree for one piece frocks.

The lessened number of chiffon blouses shown this summer is indicative of the lessened number of tailors in the country, so the workers claim. It is true that the shops are filled with wash blouses, which are always in demand for many reasons. However, there is a large segment of Anglo-Saxon women who will not forsake the coat and skirt, and they will cling to it, if not for humane reasons, in order to give men work, then for personal reasons.

It is our uniform, and we know how to wear it. We are not nearly so sure of the one piece frocks as we are of the well cut, well sewed coat and skirt. It is futile therefore to speak of its abolition while this strong feeling of approval exists for it in this country, as in England. And because of this condition it is well for women to realize that the buttonless jacket, the surplice kind is the one preferred.

It pays tribute to the fashion for the one piece frock by clinging to its skirt and not permitting of removal. It remains on the shoulders as long as the skirt remains on the hips, and the two are taken off together.

A shirtwaist may be worn beneath it for the sake of cleanliness, but the chemisette, with its shields in the three inch sleeves, is the preferred undergarment. Chemisettes are not as a rule cheaper than white shirtwaists, but they are well beloved by women to-day. They fill in the space that is left open by a surplice jacket, with due consideration for taste, cleanliness and trimness.

The surplice jacket does not leave much space to be filled in, and that is its charm for the women who do not care to go to the expense of half a dozen shirtwaists in the laundry each week. It fits closely to the neck line at back and sides, crosses at the bust, and either fastens over the hips or at the side of the waist with a loop of braid, or goes around to the back in one continuous piece.

One might infer, in looking at these surplice jackets, chemise robes, and over the head tunics and Callot mums gowns, that it is a buttonless era. We are to be tied into our clothes from now on. In truth, those sturdy-looking frocks for afternoon and evening, which strike the only really new note since 1915, give one a quick memory of the ludicrous costumes of those who took part in picnic days, hopping along in coffee sacks tied at the feet, through a lane of cheering, excited pleasure seekers.

Worn With Chemisette.

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CORSELET RIVAL OF SHIRTWAIST

THE medieval corselet is strongly accented by the French houses, and it is a wonder that more of our shops do not take it up as a specialized separate garment. The sewing rooms have already seen its advantage.

Some of the art shops are offering it in heavy Chinese pongee embroidered with wool or silk threads. Bronze, tree green, deep beige and midnight blue are the colors, and there is enough embroidery to enliven the surface.

These corselets are cut to cling to the hips and shoulders with a slight incurve at the waistline that gives them graceful folding. They are a far better and more serviceable garment than the white shirtwaist.

Lavin introduced a novelty hem on a satin corselet blouse in which a broad band of white organdy was placed under the edge and buttoned through. The buttonholes and black bone buttons were quite conspicuous.

An American version of this trick has the edge of the short coat finished with upturned tabs held with buttons, and through these tabs runs a broad band of braid. It ties and holds the coat against the hip line in the way that Lavin has made a supreme fashion.

There is a new kind of separate bodice, which is not as yet offered by a majority of tailors or dressmakers, but made up on demand. It is a loose corselet of medieval type, and it wrinkles slightly over the hips, and is cut into long ends that tie at the back and hang over the

skirt. They are finished with a heavy fringe or with a cord tassel.

This is the substitute for a separate jacket for warm weather wear. This corselet is made of satin, Georgette crepe, embroidered chiffon taffeta and even very wide ribbon mounted on soft silk. The lining is loose, the neck line is cut off round or straight across the shoulders; the sleeves are elbow length and loose, or long and tight, wrinkled at the wrist.

Woolen and silk jersey are excellent materials to substitute for the finer ones. Such corselets may be slipped over any kind of skirt and worn in the afternoon.

A black satin corselet, entire's plain, with its sashes finished with a picot edge, is worn over a knife pleated beige jersey skirt, over one of dark blue serge from which the jacket has vanished or over one made from ruffled black lace on black satin when an afternoon occasion demands a flicker of finery.

The gingham waistcoat made a tentative start for popularity, but was soon running down the track at full speed. All the younger set are wearing these waistcoats, the shops show them at different prices, and they make an alluring grouping of color in the windows.

They have started the fashion for a great variety of skeleton waistcoats that are worn instead of collars. Many are high necked, others have long, sloping, double breasted revers. They are less trouble to adjust in a blouse or coat than a collar, for they have their own fastening and are kept down at the waist by an elastic band.

Pique has come back into fashion for these waistcoats, but checked gingham and paid muslin lead.

These days, one has to ask for waist in order to get it. It is not displayed as the first fashion.

The separate skirt is of more importance this warm weather season than the separate blouse. These skirts are needed for the new short coats and cape coats.

They are box pleated, knife pleated or gored and plain. They are in solid colors, checks, stripes and Scotch plaids. They save one's best tailored suit or frock for good days, and they may be worn about the house with a blouse but with one of the new jumpers made of silk, pongee or satin. Such a costume saves laundry and starch.

The cape continues to go on the way of its sensational success. It may be envisioned before June arrives, and there is no reason why it should not be standardized as the coat is. The short cape, cut after the model of the winter fur ones, is exceptionally smart.

It is made of black velvet, faille or satin, swings loose from shoulders to hips, and opens in front over a wrap, full length waistcoat which is held across the front. The collar is high and rolls about the chin.

Other capes are taken from those worn by the Italian aviators who dot the landscape of America to-day. They fall in full swish from shoulder to hem, but present a narrow appearance across the back and neck line. There is an attached scarf that swings around the neck once and falls to the hem at the back, where it is weighted with fringe.



At left—Garden frock of pastel blue organdy with china silk slip and wide sash; hat of organdy trimmed with pink velvet ribbon and a pink rose. In centre—Black satin gown arranged as redingote to show wide front panel of biscuit Georgette. At right—New American sleeves of beige Georgette with immense ruffles tied with black velvet ribbon; frock of black satin; sailor hat of black straw with biscuit colored plumes.

FRENCH DRESSMAKER FINDS WAY TO KEEP NEW SHORT SLEEVES IN PLACE

THE short sleeves are not taken up in America as much as in France, but the wide Mandarin sleeve which ends between wrist and elbow is shown in many exaggerations and attractive color combinations. The clever woman sees to it that there is a tight cuff attached to this Mandarin sleeve, to keep it down and hanging in a good line. The tight cuff, which extends over the hand, also obviates the necessity of long sleeves.

A French dressmaker designed a new trick to keep the loose short sleeve in place, and one may say that it is cordially received with bare arms.

This sleeve, ripping away from the shoulder and not reaching the elbow, has an armlet of contrasting silk or satin attached to it by two rows of French knots in colored silk. The armlet is attached to the under side of the sleeve, and either clasps the arm as tightly as a bracelet above the elbow or, better still, drops loosely over the elbow.

Whenever the arm is lifted this band keeps the short loose sleeve in its proper place. Since short sleeves became the fashion for afternoon gowns women have struggled with their exasperating method of slipping up and over the shoulder whenever the arm is lifted on a level with the shoulder.

This trick can be taken into the heart of the sewing room and used for

various kinds of sleeves that have a trick of not remaining downward.

Doucet has a new sleeve which is very interesting. It is suggested by the opening up of those Mesopotamian regions by the British army. It is only for gowns worn in the evening, formal or informal.

The sleeve is short, like a six inch cap that fits the arm, and is finished with a band of some glittering ornamentation. At the back of this band start two stripes of this same ornamentation, which extend in a loose curve to the wrist, where they are caught by a tight bracelet of the same material. For instance, on short sleeves of black tulle, in a black and jet gown, there are two loosely flowing bands of jet from the back of the short sleeve

and these are caught into a jet brace-let.

A woman who is in search of novelty will find this a clever trick to introduce in a gown she is rearranging to meet the modern demands.

The new trick in clothes is to button the bodice down the back. This was introduced in France five years ago.

Young girls are wearing fitted satin bodices cut to a point in front, with high, organza fence collars attached and buttons of jet or bright black bone run in a line that covers the spine. Others are wearing jersey slip on blouses, velvet corselets and satin sleeveless jackets buttoned down the back.

The American milliners are earn-

estly endeavoring to bring back trimmed hats into fashion. They feel that the American woman will continue to buy shapes, cheap and expensive, bad and good, and then attempt to trim them at home. Paris has set the seal of her approval on the trimmed hat, and it is probable that we shall get the impetus of this influence by July.

As far as women and art go, the hat should be left as it is. However, the trade thinks otherwise.

The poke hat continues to gain admirers. It is both small and large; it is made of straw and of satin, and the ribbon streamers hang down the back. Young girls are ordering this kind of hat in yellow straw with pink ribbons, pink roses and a pale blue chiffon facing. Sounds Victorian, doesn't it?